

# DAIRY NEWS

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## **Proposed changes to dairy statutes**

The agency will propose changes to or repeal of six state statutes related to dairy products and processors for introduction in the 1999 legislative session. The changes would bring the laws into line with current department practices.

The laws and proposed alternatives are:

### **Chapter 15.36 RCW Fluid Milk**

Changes would include amending hearing and notice requirements to bring them into accord with recent regulatory reforms. They also would remove outdated requirements or erroneous language; extend the sunset date for the dairy assessment-initiated by statute in fiscal year 1993-to June 30, 2005; update legal requirements for dairy production and herd testing to current practices; enable the agency to issue sanitary certificates for milk processors and remove licensing requirements for distributors. Current milk distributors would be licensed as food-storage warehouses, if applicable.

Other proposed alterations include adding a civil penalty for use in lieu of degrades, suspensions or other actions; combining similar requirements into sections, and clarifying language establishing the Dairy Inspection Program Advisory Committee (DIPAC).

In addition, the proposals would enable the agency to clarify enforcement issues and assist milk processors in complying with sanitary requirements for milk shipment. As an example, one proposal to expand civil penalties authority would allow an alternative to dumping or diverting milk to other than Grade A plants as penalties for milk processors who violate provisions of the law.

The agency believes these changes will help make the law clearer and easier to use by correcting errors and redundancies, ensuring due process in enforcement, adopting appropriate penalties for violations, updating testing requirements for dairy herds, and assisting milk processors in marketing and exporting dairy products.

The Agriculture Department also proposes changes to:

### **Chapter 15.38 Filled Dairy Products**

The agency believes this statute should be repealed because the requirements are outdated and have not been upheld in court cases in other states. Adequate labeling requirements ensuring that filled dairy products' labeling is not false or misleading is adequately covered under the current food labeling requirements, which we have adopted.

### **Chapter 15.40 — Oleomargarine and Chapter 15.41 — Yellow Margarine**

The agency proposes repeal of these statutes because the requirements are outdated and have not been used for many years. Their requirements are currently covered under uniform food standards and labeling regulations that the department has adopted.

### **Chapter 16.49A Washington Meat Inspection**

Repeal of this statute is recommended because the state has not had a meat inspection program since 1973, when the inspection program was taken over by USDA.

### **Chapter 16.74 Washington Wholesome Poultry Products**

This statute is recommended for repeal because the department has not had a poultry plant inspection program since 1973, when it was taken over by USDA. Poultry plants currently licensed under this act would either not be licensed any longer by the department, or in the case of custom poultry plants they would be licensed under Chapter 69.07 RCW, the Washington Food Processing Act.

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## Use of ionophores in animal feed illegal

There have been reports that veterinary ionophores (Monensin and Lasalocid) might have been used in animal feed in an attempt to increase milk production or feed efficiency. It is unlawful to use these drugs in animal feed because they have not been approved for that use and the U. S. Food and Drug Administration has not established their safety. Even veterinarians may not legally prescribe them for extra-label use in feed. Their use may also produce illegal drug residues in the milk or tissues making these products illegal to sell and possibly causing consumers to lose confidence in the safety of the food supply.

## Johne's Disease remains common, costly illness in cattle

Johne's disease was identified more than a century ago, yet remains a common and sometimes costly infectious disease in dairy cattle. It has reportedly been found in 23.5% of the dairy herds in the west. This disease is also found in other ruminants including sheep, goats, deer, and llamas. It has been estimated that infections in dairy herds can cost as much as \$200 per cow each year in lost milk production.

Johne's disease results from infection with bacteria called *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*. This organism grows very slowly and causes a gradually worsening condition. It is highly resistant to the defenses of the animal's natural immune system, therefore they may harbor the disease for many years before they develop symptoms. Early diagnosis is difficult. Most cows studied were in their third or fourth lactation before their blood tests were positive. The infection primarily affects the intestines leading to prolonged diarrhea, poor digestion and excessive weight loss.

The bacteria are shed in the animal's feces and are quite hardy, living for months in water, feed or manure. Bacteria may also be shed in milk or colostrum and calves may be infected before they are born. Calves less than six months of age are most susceptible to infection. The bacteria are killed by pasteurization at the milk processing plant, but public health concerns exist about exposure of people to undercooked meat or raw milk from infected cattle. There has been an association made between Johne's disease in cattle and Crohn's disease in humans.

There has not been a consistent national or industry-wide education or control program in the U.S., but this is beginning to change with the formation of the National Johne's Working Group to begin more cohesive education.

For more information, call your local veterinarian; the College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington; the College of Veterinary Medicine, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon; or the State Veterinarian, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Olympia, Washington.

## New special projects team will investigate complaints

The agency has developed a new statewide special projects team that will perform special functions requiring a high degree of mobility and expertise, such as investigating consumer complaints and food poisoning outbreaks, responding to disasters where food products are involved and inspecting milk tankers.

The new team members are Food Safety Supervisor Bob Armstrong, team leader; and Food Safety Officers Deanna Fales, Alden Fitch, Jerry Wilger and Robb Willis.

## New Food Safety officers appointed

We have hired the following new Food Safety Officers since the last issue of *Dairy Newsletter*. They are *Keren LaCourse*, Snohomish County; *Walter Strong*, King County; *Miguel Taningco*, King County; *Robb Vezzetti*, Whatcom County; and *Will Satak*, Clark, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and Skamania Counties.

## Beekman completes training as milk-rating officer

*Roger Beekman* has completed training as a milk-rating officer for dairy farms and has just been certified by FDA for farm surveys. He will now begin training with *Don Penders* and *Jim Pressley*, our milk-rating officers, for milk plant surveys.

**DAIRY NEWS**--This newsletter is published by the Washington State Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Program to foster a better understanding and harmony between the Department and its dairy farmer constituents by informing them of current issues and policy and, to solicit their input and constructive criticisms. For more information contact Mike Donovan, Food Safety Program Manager; at (360) 902-1883 or at PO Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560. Inquiries regarding availability of this publication in alternative formats should be directed to the WSDA Food Safety Program at (360) 902-1883 or TDD (360) 902-1996.